Saga RPG: First Blade – Review

Android

Review by Very_Snappy

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Dragon Quest clone #456,632 has some glaring flaws, but it's so short they don't matter.

Since the original DQ came out there have been a zillion copies of it, and Saga RPG is…one of them. Objectively it's kind of a bad game, but I happen to have a soft spot for DQ and games like it, so this little free app was right up my alley.

Just like the original DQ, you'll only ever have one character in Saga RPG. You start off with some vague instructions from the king, and then it's off to start slaying monsters and pursuing loot. The controls, and the game overall, are very simple. There is a 3x3 menu of controls at the bottom of the screen, with the four directions for movement, a Go button in the middle, a Hero button to see your status, and Save and Quit buttons. Despite the simplicity of the controls they have some annoying flaws, the first one being you can't just hold down one of the directional buttons to move. If you want to keep moving right for instance, you have to push right over and over again instead of just holding down. A very simple thing that 10 minutes of game testing would have caught.

Another issue with the controls is that they are pretty small, and you'll often hit the wrong button (and I played it on an iPad Mini, I can't even imagine how bad it would be on a phone). To compound that problem, the buttons are right next to each other, and because you have to repeatedly hit each button when you want to move, you'll be constantly hitting the wrong one, bringing up your status when you try to move up or left or down for example. The worst one is the Quit button; it's next to the Right button so you'll push it all the time. Iit does bring up a confirmation box before it quits the game, but in your mad rush to tap the Right button a million times you'll sometimes blow right through it and quit accidentally. Very annoying.

One final issue with the controls is that the revenue model for the game is a unique one: it shows you an ad whenever you save. My initial thought is to object to that on the grounds of breaking the immersion, but on second thought the act of saving itself is very immersion-breaking, so perhaps if you have to have an ad somewhere that's as good of a spot as any. Or better yet, put your device in airplane mode and skip the ads altogether.

The presentation is very barebones; no music, no sounds, and no story other than "go kill the bad guy". Graphics are basic as well; no animation at all, not a lot of variety in the color palette.

The combat system is as simple as could possibly be; encounters are random (and often). When you enter into combat you get two options: attack or run. That's it, no spells, no items in combat, no skills, just the two options. It makes combat go very quickly though, which is nice since the encounter rate is fairly high. You just hit attack over and over again, watching the HP totals of you and the bad guy descend until one of you is dead. It's really not anymore mindless than combat in most RPGs, but the simplicity of it lays bare the fact that the combat is just a chore to check off as you make your way through the game.

So far it sounds like I hated this game, but I really didn't. The saving grace is something that most people would consider a serious flaw but I think it's great, especially in this case: the game is very very short. As in, you can easily beat it in an hour or two. I don't know what my total game time was, but I know it was less than 2 hours. I like short games and think most RPGs could be significantly shorter (and better for it), but even for me that's a pretty short game.

And for that short of a time you can put up with the various issues I've outlined. Exploring is kind of fun, even in a relatively small world such as this one, and because the pace is so quick the game never feels like it drags. You'll only be around level 10 or so when you finish, so there isn't a lot of grinding to be done (obviously, since the whole game is so short). You get to run around, grab some new equipment, kill a few beasties, explore a little bit, and get the satisfaction of finishing the game before it wears on you.

Of course, just because you can put up it doesn't mean you necessarily should. Is this game worth the hour or two you'll need to invest in it? For me it is because I enjoy the Dragon Quest simplistic game style. It's also nice to be able to finish an RPG in a day, as opposed by the 40 – 60 hour behemoths that have become the standard. And it's free, which is another point in its favor.

In the end this is nowhere near a must play; it doesn't do anything new or different, and it's gameplay we've all seen before. But if you like these types of games and need something to do for an hour or two it's a fun romp.

Rating: 6

Product Release: Saga RPG: First Blade (IOS) (US, 08/20/2013)

Recommend this Review?

Yes No

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Game Detail

Platform: Android

Genre: Role-Playing » General

Developer/Publisher: iDurocher Technology

Release: September 26, 2012

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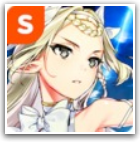

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